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Assessing How Diversity Affects Students' Interest in Social Change

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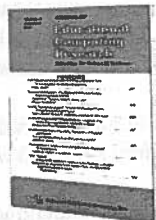
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**ASSESSING HOW DIVERSITY AFFECTS STUDENTS'
INTEREST IN SOCIAL CHANGE**

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ABSTRACT

As the country's racial/ethnic minority representation increases, colleges and universities have increasingly sought to diversify their enrollments in order to better prepare all students to live and work in a diverse democracy. However, diversification may negatively affect campus climate and undergraduate peer relations leading to both increased racial tensions and to lower levels of satisfaction and retention for both minority and majority students. This study examined the effects of students' entry characteristics, pre-college environments, and pre-college activities on 3 democratic outcomes that serve as potential indicators of new undergraduate students' readiness to positively engage with diversity: social change self-efficacy, social action engagement, and social leadership skills. Data were collected from 1 of 10 public universities that participated in a 2001 national study that investigated how diversity helps shape students' attitudes and beliefs. The results indicate that students who are more engaged with diversity prior to college are more likely to perceive themselves as ready to proactively engage with diversity as college students.

INTRODUCTION

The recent legal decision in June 2003 for the practice of Affirmative Action in college and university admissions paves the way for postsecondary institutions to continue working to diversify their enrollments. The Supreme Court's decision supports proponents of race-based admissions policies who claim that one of the

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highest priorities for colleges and universities is to provide "documentation of the academic benefits of diversity" (Orfield, 1998, p. 14). In her expert testimony gathered for the defense in the Michigan cases, Gurin (1999, p. 36) discussed previous research and provided new analyses of prior research studies that show that "diversity is a critically important factor in creating the richly varied educational experience that helps students learn and prepares them for participation in a democracy that is characterized by diversity" (p. 36). She noted that "colleges and universities have an obligation to choose carefully the kind of student body that will create the best learning environment for all their students" (p. 36). Given the increasing importance of the need to document the educational benefits of diversity, further research about the ways in which diverse student bodies improve the educational climate for all students on campus is essential.

Studying race as a factor in predicting educational outcomes is certainly not a new concept (e.g., see Allen, Epps, & Haniff, 1991; Astin, 1982; Mow & Nettles, 1990; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991); however, as both Hurtado (1999) and Orfield (2001) attest, court cases are dictating a need for compelling, hard evidence of the benefits of having diverse student bodies. Increased recognition of the importance of addressing issues of diversity more intentionally and comprehensively on university campuses provided the impetus for a national study called *Preparing College Students for a Diverse Democracy* (Sylvia Hurtado, Principle Investigator). Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, 10 public universities collaborated to collect longitudinal data that will explore "how colleges build bridges across multiple social divisions in practice, provide important student learning opportunities in interaction with members of diverse communities, and demonstrate growth in their students' cognitive and social skills and democratic sensibilities" (Hurtado, Engberg, Ponjuan, & Landreman, 2002, p. 164).

Although Hurtado et al. (2002) have provided multi-institutional analyses of some of the data from the project, it is important to analyze data for each institution, because each institution must be able to defend its own admission policies and practices based on its own data. The University of Massachusetts Amherst (UMA) is one of the 10 institutions participating in the Diverse Democracy project, and the purpose of this article is to discuss the institutional data pertaining to UMA.

Although the ultimate goal of the Diverse Democracy project is to examine how both pre-collegiate diversity beliefs and experiences coupled with collegiate experiences help shape cognitive, social cognitive, and democratic outcomes, the collegiate experiential data are currently in a preliminary stage of analysis. The purpose of this article is to analyze the first phase of the research which investigated how pre-collegiate experiences affect students' attitudes, beliefs, and interests in social change. Knowledge about the ways in which pre-collegiate experiences affect students' attitudes, beliefs, and interests in social change is likely to help faculty and administrators understand students' readiness to interact with diversity. Such readiness influences how well students cope with

encountering diversity at college and how likely those same students are to be satisfied and willing to stay engaged with educational opportunities on a diverse campus.

The data in this article provide an overview of how students from different racial/ethnic backgrounds and with different experiences with diverse interactions perceive their own roles as agents of social change and their own abilities as students and leaders. Additionally, the data will be used to examine how individual and experiential differences shape students' expectations for college. Moreover, this article will use the findings from the study as a basis for discussing ways in which campus leaders can be more proactive and intentional about enacting programs and policies that address diverse student perspectives about living and learning in diverse environments. Hopefully, this discussion will inform activities on college and university campuses that will facilitate higher levels of student learning, development, satisfaction, and persistence.

BACKGROUND

Demographics: Segregated Diversity

Because in the near future, one-third of the U.S. population will be a member of a racial/ethnic minority, students must be prepared to study and work in a diverse democracy. The U.S. Census Bureau (2002) projects that by the year 2010 almost 300 million people will live in this country, and Latinos will make up the largest minority group (at over 43 million). Although the rise in the minority population certainly is a major demographic change, Keller (2001) identified several other demographic changes in this country that are going to increase diversity and forcefully impact higher education.

Keller emphasized that the population is aging, and that this change will affect not only whom we teach but what we teach and how our graduates will apply their knowledge. He also noted that changes in the traditional family structure have accompanied higher divorce rates, more children born to single parents, and higher proportions of children in poverty. Keller also discussed the impact of what he called the rising "immigrant tidal wave"—750,000–900,000 legal immigrants, perhaps 300,000 illegal immigrants, and another 200,000 people entering the country on student, work, or tourist visas never to return to their native countries (although, the aftermath of the 9-11 tragedy may slow this trend). Keller also discussed the growth of inter-racial marriages and the resulting increase of bi-racial and multi-racial children entering college. Keller maintained that this "growing creolization of the students, staff, and faculty in U.S. higher education is also likely to diminish the current high degree of attention to color, ethnic, and religious classification" (p. 233), but his position is certainly debatable. What is *not* debatable is that all of these demographic shifts are clearly adding to the diversity of the nation's population and our colleges; consequently, our

students, especially those who are socialized in racially segregated environments, must be prepared to learn and work in increasingly diverse environments.

As the country becomes more diverse, many communities remain racially segregated. Even in increasingly diverse large municipalities, the settlement pattern since the mid-1950s has been by a collection of neighborhoods that Putnam (2000) described as a "sociological mosaic—collectively heterogeneous, but individually homogenous" (p. 209). He explained that urban and suburban neighborhoods became distinctly White, Black, Hispanic, or Asian separated by invisible sociological barriers. In some areas, he noted, these invisible barriers materialized into physical barriers such as "gated communities" that were established in the mid-1980s. This type of residential segregation restricts social interaction among racial/ethnic groups. In many areas, individual schools remain segregated, precluding interaction among children of different racial and ethnic backgrounds (Orfield, Bachmeir, James, & Eitle, 1997). It is important to note that even in many "desegregated" schools, the student bodies remain segregated to some extent because a disproportionate number of low-income students and students of color are relegated to "lower-tracked" classes (Banks, 1997). Given that so many students, especially Latinos and African Americans, grow up in segregated K-12 school systems (Orfield et al. 1997), it is not surprising that many students are unprepared for the diversity they encounter upon enrolling in certain colleges and universities. As a result, diversifying a student body without attending to how diversification affects campus climate and undergraduate peer relations may lead to both increased racial tensions and to lower levels of satisfaction and retention for both minority and majority students (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson, & Allen, 1999).

Impact of Diversity on Student Learning and Behavior

Gurin (1999) has argued that the most important obligation of institutions of higher education is "to create the best possible educational environment for the young adults whose lives are likely to be significantly changed during their years on campus" (p. 36). She also maintained that most colleges and universities embrace the goal of preparing students for active participation in our democratic society. Gurin emphasized that because our society is increasingly characterized by diversity, colleges and universities should create diverse learning environments on campus so that students will gain an understanding of diverse populations.

Although many colleges and universities want to better prepare students to live and learn in diverse environments, faculty and staff typically do not know how to accomplish this goal. Researchers have shown that pre-college characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors are strong influences on various student behaviors and outcomes during their introduction to collegiate life (Astin, 1993; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Tinto, 1993). Consequently, it should not

be surprising that such pre-college associations also are influential regarding diversity issues. Hurtado (1999) noted that students' perspectives are shaped in part by where they grow up and with whom they associate. Pascarella, Edison, Nora, Hagerdorn, and Terenzini (1996) found that the strongest predictor of first-year college students' openness to diversity and challenges to their beliefs and values was their opinions on these issues before they began college. In a follow-up, longitudinal study of these same students, researchers found that pre-college attitudes were the strongest predictors in the students' second and third years of college as well (Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Terenzini, & Nora, 2001). In other words, "the most significant positive influence on a student's openness to diversity and challenge during the first three years of college was the student's openness before college" (p. 188). This study also found that the following groups of students were significantly more likely than their counterparts to be open to diversity and challenge: women, older students, students who participated in racial or cultural awareness workshops in college, and students who interacted with diverse peers. Students of color were more likely than White students to be open to diversity and challenge during the first two years but not the third year.

Gurin (1999) used three different sets of data collected from undergraduate students to investigate the relationship between diversity and student learning. She used two different research studies from the University of Michigan and a national study from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) at the UCLA Higher Education Research Institute. Gurin found that attending a racially/ethnically diverse institution led to more diverse classroom experiences, more diverse interactions among students, and more diverse friends, neighbors, and work associates. She also found that students who had experienced the most diverse classrooms and interactions with peers showed the "greatest engagement in active thinking processes, growth in intellectual engagement and motivation, and growth in intellectual and academic skills" (p. 45). These same students also showed the "most engagement in various forms of citizenship, and the most engagement with people from different races/cultures" (p. 46).

Hurtado et al. (2002) analyzed some of the same data used in this current study to investigate the influence of students' pre-college experiences on the following three democratic outcomes: "ability to see the world from someone else's perspective, beliefs about whether conflict enhances democracy, and views of the importance of engaging in social action activities during college" (p. 164). Although the researchers found that the variance in each individual outcome measure had different predictors, some pattern of effects existed across the three outcomes. For instance, pre-college engagement produced the largest change in total variance explained for each outcome model. In other words, each of the following was a significant predictor in each model: participation in race/ethnic discussions, student clubs, and volunteer work; studying with different race/ethnic groups; and discussing controversial issues. Also, women were more likely than men to "report values and beliefs consistent with democratic outcomes" (p. 182).

The researchers also discovered that students with pre-college interaction with peers from racial/ethnic groups different from their own are more likely to see the world from someone else's perspective and value the importance of engaging social action activities to create change in society.

Current Study

Although multiple institutional studies (e.g., Hurtado et al., 2002; Pascarella et al., 1996; Whitt et al., 2001) provide an excellent context to study higher education as a whole, such studies are not very helpful for individual institutions that must analyze the impact of their own policies and practices on their students. Gurin's (1999) effort to analyze the University of Michigan sets an important example of what every institution should do. The purpose of this current study is to implement many of the approaches of prior studies in order to investigate how previous experiences with diversity affects students' attitudes, beliefs, and interest in social change at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework used to guide the analysis in this study is depicted in Figure 1 and has been adapted from a previous model by Hurtado et al. (2002). The adapted model used in the current study conceptualizes the development of democratic outcomes as the product of an interaction among students' background characteristics (including gender, race, income, first generation college student, and high school class rank), pre-college environments (such as urban high school, public high school, homogeneity of neighborhoods and schools, interactions with diverse others, and incidences of encountered discrimination), and pre-college engagement (including participation in general formal high school activities, participation in political activities, diversity workshop attendance, and enrollment in a multicultural course). The model focuses on how student background characteristics, pre-college environments, and pre-college engagement impact three democratic outcomes: social change self-efficacy, social action engagement, and social leadership skills. These outcomes show how students rate their own abilities (in terms of self-efficacy and leadership) as agents for social change and their readiness or willingness to use those abilities to actually engage in change.

METHODOLOGY

The instrument for this study was designed specifically for the Diverse Democracy Project. Researchers from all 10 participating campuses provided input into the design of the instrument. The instrument was designed to collect demographic and pre-college experiential data as well as attitudinal and opinion data on specific issues related to diversity and social change. Several items and

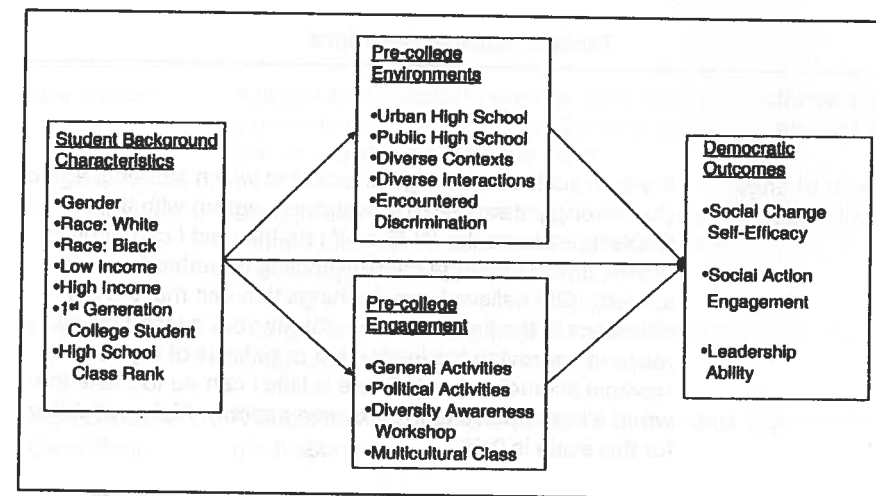


Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

scales from instruments used in prior studies were utilized along with many newly designed items.

In the first phase of data collection for this project, all 10 institutions administered the survey to entering students in the summer/fall of 2000. During the summer, the University of Massachusetts Amherst administered the survey to entering first-year students who were attending orientation. Of the 3,690 students who enrolled at the University, 3,006 completed the survey, providing a response rate for the survey of 81.4%. The number of respondents and corresponding response rates for individual racial/ethnic groups are as follows: White = 2503 (88.0%), Asian/Pacific Islander = 246 (84.5%), Latino/Hispanic/Chicano = 85 (64.9%), African American/Black = 73 (55.3%), Multi-racial/ethnic = 67, American Indian/Alaskan Native = 6 (35.3%), Unreported = 26. One should note that a small percentage of enrollees did not participate in the orientation program and therefore did not have the opportunity to participate in the survey project.

Table 1 provides definitions for all variables and constructed, multi-item scales used in this study. In order to analyze the data in a manner consistent with the conceptual framework, blocked hierarchical regression was used against each dependent variable. Blocked hierarchical regression is a statistical method that provides a means for examining how well each set of variables predicts the dependent variable, or in this case provides a way to examine how each set of variables—students entry characteristics, pre-college environments and pre-college engagement—contributes to the understanding of the development of democratic outcomes in entering university students. Here, each dependent

Table 1. Variable Definitions

Democratic Outcomes	
Social Change Self-Efficacy	A 4-item scale measuring the extent to which students agree (1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree) with the following statements: (1) Even if I do the best I can to help others, it won't change the way society operates (reverse scored); (2) I believe I can do things that can make a big difference in the lives of others; (3) My vote doesn't count much in improving the leadership or policies of my country (reverse scored); and (4) There is little I can do to make the world a better place to live (reverse scored). Alpha reliability for this scale is 0.66.
Social Action Engagement	A 9-item scale measuring the extent to which students intend (1 = very unlikely to 4 = very likely) to engage in the following activities: (1) Help members of the community get out to vote in elections; (2) Challenge others on racially/sexually derogatory comments; (3) Join an organization that promotes cultural diversity; (4) Make an effort to educate others about social issues; (5) Make efforts to get to know individuals from diverse backgrounds; (6) Get elected to student office; (7) Participate in student protests; (8) Participate in groups and activities reflecting your own cultural background; and (9) Take a course devoted to diversity issues in your first year in college. Alpha reliability for this scale is 0.82.
Social Leadership Abilities	A 3-item scale measuring the extent to which students rate themselves (1 = a major weakness to 4 = a major strength) with the following statements: (1) Communication skills; (2) Leadership ability; and (3) Social self-confidence. Alpha reliability for this scale is 0.75.
Entry Characteristics	
Gender: Female	A single item indicating the gender of each student (1 = male, 2 = female)
Race: White	A single item indicating whether each student is White (1 = non-White, 2 = White)
Race: Black	A single item indicating whether each student is African American/Black (1 = non-Black, 2 = Black)

Table 1. (Cont'd.)

Low Income	A single item indicating whether each student is from a low income family (1 = more than \$30,000 per year, 2 = less than or equal to \$30,000 per year)
High Income	A single item indicating whether each student is from a high income family (1 = less than \$60,000 per year, 2 = more than or equal to \$60,000 per year)
First Generation	A single item indicating whether a student is the first in their family to attend college (1 = no, 2 = yes)
High School Class Rank	A single item indicating a student's rank in their high school graduation class.
Pre-College Environments	
Urban High School	A single item indicating whether a student graduated from an urban high school (1 = no, 2 = yes)
Public High School	A single item indicating whether a student graduated from a public high school (1 = no, 2 = yes)
Homogenous Social Contexts	A 3-item scale describing the racial/ethnic composition (1 = all or nearly all people of color to 5 = all or nearly all White) of (1) neighborhood in which the student grew up; (2) high school the student graduated from; and (3) the student's friends in high school. Alpha reliability for this scale is 0.82.
Diverse interactions	A 9-item scale indicating how much interaction student had (1 = no interaction to 4 = substantial interaction) with the following groups prior to coming to college: (1) African Americans/Blacks; (2) Hispanics/Latinos/Chicanos; (3) Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders; (4) Whites/Caucasians; (5) American Indians/Alaskan Natives; (6) Multi-racial/multi-ethnic individuals; (7) Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual individuals; (8) People with disabilities; and (9) People with different religious beliefs. Alpha reliability for this scale is 0.76.
Encountered Discrimination	A 5-item scale indicating how often (1 = never to 3 = frequently) a student reported encountering discrimination in high school based on: (1) race/ethnicity; (2) gender; (3) sexual orientation; (4) economic background; and (5) religious affiliation. Alpha reliability for this scale is 0.68.

Table 1. (Cont'd.)

Pre-College Engagement	
General Activities	A 7-item scale indicating how often (1 = never to 5 = daily) a student reported engaging in the following activities: (1) volunteer work; (2) student clubs; (3) activities to clean the environment; (4) academic honor societies; (5) school publications; (6) religious activities or spiritual ceremonies; and (7) varsity sports. Alpha reliability for this scale is 0.59.
Political Activities	A 4-item scale indicating how often (1 = never to 5 = daily) a student reported engaging in the following activities: (1) discussed politics with students; (2) discussed racial/ethnic issues; (3) followed the presidential election process; and (4) read a newspaper. Alpha reliability for this scale is 0.68.
Diversity Awareness Program	A single item indicating whether a student had attended a diversity awareness program (1 = no, 2 = yes).
Multicultural Course	A single item indicating whether a student had taken a class on multicultural/diversity issues (1 = no, 2 = yes).

variable was: a) regressed on the first block and beta weights were reported; b) regressed on the first and second blocks and beta weights were recorded for the second block; and c) regressed on the first, second, and third blocks and betas were reported for the third block. In this procedure, a block's betas were reported only when controlling for all previous blocks according to the model presented in Figure 1.

RESULTS

The regression equation predicting Social Change Self-Efficacy explained just over 11% of the variance. Two entry characteristics had significant effects as shown by the standardized regression coefficient beta weights (B): Females ($B = .15***$) were more likely than males to report higher levels on this outcome, and high income students ($B = -.05*$) were less likely than lower income students to do so. Students from urban high schools were less likely ($B = -.06**$) to report higher levels of social change self-efficacy, and students who have reported higher levels of interaction with diverse people were more likely ($B = .11***$)

to be confident of their skills in this area. Political activism ($B = .11***$), higher levels of engagement in general activities ($B = .09***$), and attendance at diversity workshops ($B = .06**$) all had positive effects on Social Change Self-Efficacy.

The regression equation predicting Social Action Engagement accounted for just over 25% of the variance. In terms of entry characteristics, females ($B = .19***$) and students from low income families ($B = .06**$) were more likely to intend to participate in democratic activities while in college. Prior diverse interactions also demonstrated a positive effect ($B = .11***$) on this outcome, as did previous exposure to discrimination ($B = .04*$), although students from less racially diverse home and school environments were less likely ($B = -.14***$) to view democratic action as an important college activity. Four forms of pre-college engagement—political activities ($B = .26***$), diversity workshops ($B = .13***$), participation in general activities ($B = .12***$), and multicultural classes ($B = .07**$)—exerted positive effects on intentions to participate in democratic activities while in college.

Twenty-two percent of the variance was explained by the equation predicting the development of Social Leadership Skills. Income was the only significant predictor among the entry characteristics. Students from lower income backgrounds were less likely ($B = -.04*$) to rate themselves highly in these skills; conversely, their higher income peers were more likely ($B = .06*$) to rate their social leadership skills more highly. Students who had suffered more instances of discrimination were less likely ($B = -.04$) to perceive that they have strong social leadership skills. Graduates of both public ($B = .07**$) and urban ($B = .06**$) high schools had higher levels of self-reported leadership skills, as did students who had more diverse interactions ($B = .11***$), students from less diverse contexts ($B = .08**$), and students from racially and ethnically homogenous environments ($B = .08*$). Pre-college engagement also had positive effects on self-reported leadership skills. Participation in general activities ($B = .28***$), political activism ($B = .13***$), and diversity workshops ($B = .05**$) all had positive effects on leadership skill levels.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study clearly indicate that students come to college with varying levels of development with regard to their readiness to engage in a diverse campus environment. All three groups of variables—student entry characteristics, pre-college experiences, and pre-college engagement—appear to impact levels of democratic outcomes for entering college students. It is no surprise that students from different backgrounds, who grow up and attend schools in different contexts, and engage in different types of activities are at varying degrees of readiness to take advantage of and contribute the educational benefits of campus diversity. Each of these sets of contributing factors is discussed in greater detail.

Table 2. Results of Multiple Regression Equations

	Social change self-efficacy	Social action engagement	Social leader- ship skills
Entry Characteristics			
Gender: Female	.15***	.19***	-.03
Race: Black	.00	.01	.03
Race: White	-.02	.00	.03
Low Income	.02	.06**	-.04*
High Income	-.05*	-.02	.06*
1st Generation	-.02	-.03	-.01
High School class rank	-.04	.01	.03
R ² for Block	.031	.052	.030
Pre-College Environments			
Urban High School	-.06**	-.02	.06**
Public High School	-.02	-.01	.07**
Homogenous Social Contexts	.03	-.14***	.08**
Diverse Interactions	.11***	.11***	.11***
Discriminatory Experiences	-.04	.04*	-.04*
R ² for Block	.025	.083	.068
Pre-College Engagement			
General Activities	.09***	.12***	.28***
Political Activities	.11***	.26***	.13***
Diversity Program	.06**	.13***	.05**
Multicultural Course	-.02	.07**	.02
R ² for Block	.050	.119	.122
Total R²	.113***	.254**	.220***
Adjusted R²	.107***	.248***	.215***

* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$.

Entry characteristics explained surprisingly low amounts of variance for the three democratic outcomes that were the focus of the research for this study. Literature on diversity in higher education has typically focused on student characteristics and the ways in which different types of students are more or less predisposed to be more engaged with or accepting of diversity. Yet, the fact that entry characteristics account for less explained variance than either of the other two conceptual blocks (pre-college environment and pre-college engagement) suggests that inherent and family characteristics play a less important role in shaping students' attitudes toward social change and diversity than does the nature of the social contexts and the types of interactions students have in those contexts.

This finding has important implications, not only for higher education, but for K-12 education as well. The pattern of findings that are emerging from this study indicate that exposure to diversity and the facilitation of interaction across diverse groups prior to college will enable students to be more ready to reap the educational benefits of diversity while in college and will better prepare students to lead such efforts on campus as students and perhaps in broader society as college graduates. Therefore, efforts to provide diverse learning environments and numerous opportunities for diverse interaction should be encouraged throughout primary and secondary education.

It is interesting that women appear more likely than men to enter college with higher levels of self-efficacy for social change and with greater intentions to become engaged in social action. More research should be directed as to why this happens and what can be done to facilitate greater development in these areas for male students.

Students from different socioeconomic backgrounds come to college with different levels of readiness to be engaged in social change. Income was a significant predictor in all three equations, although with varying effects. Students from lower income backgrounds are more likely to be ready to actively participate in democratic activities in college although they are less likely to have confidence in their leadership ability. This is a troubling combination because it indicates that some of the students who are most likely to engage in democratic action may be less likely to lead such efforts, thus potentially leaving the leadership of campus activities in the hands of students who are more comfortable assuming such roles but less likely to use those skills to promote democratic action opportunities across campus. High income students clearly have higher levels of self-reported leadership abilities than do their middle and low income peers, yet they also have lower levels of self-efficacy for engaging in social change. Again, this makes it less likely that they will devote their leadership abilities to promote democratic outcomes. It is interesting that the two measures of income were the only two entry characteristics that served as significant predictors of social leadership skill development. This may indicate that the ways in which leadership ability is defined mirrors class-based assumptions about leadership that may more accurately reflect upper-class values than lower class notions of what it means to be a leader.

The fact that neither of the variables measuring race was a significant predictor in any of the three equations is surprising. Much existing literature has focused primarily on the role of race as an important predictor of positive attitudes and intentions toward democratic action. Yet, that is not the case in this study. This may reflect differences in the types of students who choose to attend the University of Massachusetts as opposed to other institutions around the country. This is clearly an area that requires further study.

In terms of leadership development, the patterns of findings reveal some effects that suggest high school students may be finding ways to develop these skills in a

variety of contexts. Urban and public high school contexts both had positive effects on perceived leadership ability as did homogenous environments and interactions with diversity. This is an interesting pattern given that one would not necessarily expect that some of these environmental contexts would exert the same types of effects on students as would other dissimilar environments. For example, diversity interaction and homogenous environments represent different ends of the diversity continuum, yet exposure to each led to increased levels of self-reported leadership ability. This finding may not be that surprising given that social leadership ability is the most generic of the three outcomes examined in this study.

The role of pre-college environments is clearly important as a source of influence on the development of democratic attitudes and beliefs, although several of the effects appear to be mixed. For example, urban high school environments demonstrate positive effects on social leadership development but may dampen students' feelings about their own ability to effect social change, while homogenous social contexts also affect social leadership development positively but have negative effects on intentions to participate in democratic social change activities while in college. These mixed results are worthy of further study because social leadership ability is probably a necessary skill for students to possess in order to be effective agents for social change, but it is not sufficient. Without additional motivation, such as a sense of social change self-efficacy or intention to use leadership skills toward democratic ends, students are unlikely to make full use of those valuable skills. Some might even contend that such a limitation would inhibit students from making the most appropriate uses of their leadership skills.

Interactions with diversity prior to college strengthen all three of the democratic outcomes included in this study. This supports previous research on the benefits of diversity. It is further evidence that policy-makers and educators at all levels should work to provide students with diverse learning environments. This is particularly important in an era where challenges to Affirmative Action are increasing and more institutions appear to be retreating from public support of Affirmative Action and its principles.

Students who more frequently encountered discrimination prior to college are more likely to intend to participate in democratic action, but are less likely to have confidence in their social leadership skills. The negative impact on social skills is one of many detrimental effects of discrimination on individuals. It is important to note that students who experience discrimination are more likely to want to be involved in democratic activities which are often aimed at ending discrimination. For students who have not encountered discrimination, perhaps even greater exposure to the reality that discrimination exists may have positive effects on their desire to become more involved in social action. This is another area that merits further attention in future studies.

The strength of the pre-college engagement effects found in this study indicates that involvement in high school is important. All four of the involvement measures

had positive effects on democratic outcomes. In fact, the pre-college engagement measures accounted for more of the explained variance in all three equations than did either of the other two blocks of variables. While the positive effects of political activism, attendance at a diversity workshop, and completing a multicultural course are to be expected, the strength of positive effects exerted by general involvement in high school activities on all three outcomes is a little surprising given that these activities are not as directly targeted to these outcomes as are the other three types of involvement. This finding supports the previous work of Astin (1982, 1993) and others who have emphasized the wide range of educational and developmental benefits that accrue from involvement. The importance of involvement in promoting the democratic social change outcomes should be noted by secondary and postsecondary educational leaders who should be providing opportunities for and encouraging involvement in a wide range of activities on campus.

Attendance in diversity awareness workshops is clearly a positive source of influence on democratic outcomes, although the exact nature of the causal relationship is not clear from this study. It is unclear whether students who are more likely to be interested and involved in social change are more likely to enroll in such a workshop, or if the workshop fosters such inclinations. Of course, the relationship is likely to be more complex than that. Students who have more highly developed social change skills and attitudes are probably more likely to enroll in diversity workshops, but they, like all students, are likely to have those skills and attitudes accentuated by the experience.

It is mildly surprising that enrollment in multi-culturally focused courses had a positive effect on only one of the outcomes—willingness to participate in democratic activities. It may be that such courses do not emphasize the development of self-efficacy for social change or leadership skills. It also may be the case that these courses may not have as big of an impact on student outcomes if some students are taking them merely as requirements without particular interest in the topic and therefore are less engaged with the material.

CONCLUSION

The findings from this study are particularly important given a recent report (Rothman, Lipset, & Nevitte, 2003) that increased diversity on campus does not lead to educational benefits and may even contribute to increased racial tension on college and university campuses. Although much more research is clearly needed to substantiate these findings, it has been well established elsewhere (Hurtado et al., 1999) that increasing student diversity without paying attention to associated historical, psychological, and behavioral issues may negate the well documented potential educational value of creating diverse campuses. In order to facilitate positive educational outcomes (including increased satisfaction and persistence for both minority and majority students),

campus leaders need to become more aware of the developmental readiness of new students to engage with diversity. The democratic outcomes examined in this study provide one such set of measures that can be used at postsecondary educational institutions to begin assessing such readiness. Assessments of students' readiness to positively engage with diversity can then serve as the basis for more intentional planning and programming on the part of campus leaders and educators to facilitate more diverse campus climates that better serve the needs of all students as they persist toward earning their undergraduate degrees on the way to their futures in an increasingly diverse society.

The findings from this study also have some important implications regarding the development of more positive campus racial climates. Historically, much of the effort to diversify college campuses has focused on increasing the structural diversity of the student body in terms of race and ethnicity. As noted earlier, it has been demonstrated that campus diversity is most successful in terms of providing a positive climate for under-represented students and for providing educational benefits for all students when the psychological and behavioral components of the campus have also been diversified (Hurtado et al., 1999). By identifying students who are more willing to engage in democratic social change, colleges, and universities can develop student bodies that provide a more supportive psychological and behavioral climate for students of color. Moreover, a greater critical mass of students interested in social change has the potential for exerting positive peer effects on other students who are less interested or less well developed in this area. Therefore, admissions officers may want to look for ways of identifying students with such inclinations and abilities in order to maximize the educational benefits of diversity on their campuses.

The results of this study also indicate that students who are more engaged with diversity prior to college are more likely to perceive themselves as ready to proactively engage with diversity as college students. Given that the shifting demographic portrait of our society is becoming increasingly diverse, students are more likely to find themselves living and working in diverse contexts. Additionally, the on-going need for leadership and social change in a society that continues to sustain social inequities demands future leaders who have the inclination and skill to engage in creating positive social change that strives to abolish such inequities. For these reasons, and many others, it is important that higher education emphasize the development of democratic outcomes as a priority. The data also suggest that students' previous interactions with diversity can help facilitate these outcomes; further exposure to diversity in college should strengthen such effects and provide students who have not previously been exposed to the educational benefits of diversity with opportunities to experience a diverse learning environment and to develop attitudes and skills that will serve them and society well in the future.

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